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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 000065

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TAGS: [ECON](#) [PGOV](#) [EAIR](#) [EAID](#) [IZ](#)  
SUBJECT: NINEWA: SUCCESSFUL HAJJ FLIGHTS CREATE HOPES FOR  
COMMERCIAL AIR TRAFFIC

Classified By: Acting Political Counselor Ellen Germain for reasons 1.4  
(b,d).

This is a Ninewa Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) message.

¶1. (C) Sumamry: Mosul Airport in December successfully processed thousands of Hajj pilgrims, arousing a sense of local pride and hope that commercial flights will continue for the betterment of the Ninewa economy. While there are many logistical hurdles to dividing Ninewa,s airport and airspace between commercial and military use, PRT is convening a working group and talking to local business contacts to determine means of moving forward. The economic boon and popular enthusiasm that a commercially functional airport is likely to generate make this initiative well worth the effort.

Mosul Airport Commercial Air Service Is a Reality  
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¶2. (SBU) The Iraq Civil Aviation Authority and Iraqi Airways successfully enplaned 2,629 Hajj pilgrims through Mosul Airport on 22 commercial domestic and international flights from December 2 to December 9. Those operations utilized approved Civil Aviation Security (AVSEC) procedures, which provide four redundant screening processes, without incident. Apart from an initial return flight to the Erbil Airport, all Mosul passengers are returning to Mosul Airport. The successful operation of Hajj flights is a tribute to the dedication of Iraqi officials in Baghdad and Mosul, and the multi-agency team of the PRT, 1st Armored Division, 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment, the Embassy Baghdad Economic Section, the Office of the Transportation Attache and the Office of Provincial Affairs.

Ninewa's Energy Unleashed  
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¶3. (SBU) With the feasibility of commercial air service through Mosul Airport now established, local and national Iraqi officials have told the PRT they hope to see regular commercial flights from Mosul continue after Hajj operations. The possibility of air service to the political, cultural and tourism centers of Baghdad, Aleppo, Damascus, Istanbul, Ankara, Cairo and Dubai has generated excitement and unleashed energy among Mosul's traditionally active political and business communities.

Surmountable Issues Remain on Way to Regular Flights  
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¶4. (SBU) Several key issues must be resolved before long-term air service commitments to air carriers outside of Iraq can occur:

- Planned, phased and staged transition of Mosul airspace and airport from total military control to controlled, shared and joint use civilian airspace and airport operations.

- Mosul Airport designated as a landing rights airport for international operation to and from other countries. This step will require international coordination and route approval. Domestic service to intra-Iraq destinations, however, could occur much faster without requiring international coordination.

- The new, USG-funded, \$10.3 million Air Traffic Control Tower is located in the middle of a Coalition Force base. CF, PRT and Iraqi authorities have to negotiate control of, access to, and equipment needs for shared use of the tower.

- Proper airport planning to locate short-term capital development for fuel storage, cargo facilities, vehicle maintenance and other similar development must take place. Usage of current temporary facilities on the CF base will continue until sound land-use planning is completed.

- Instrument Landing System commissioning, approach and departure procedures and charts, and Navigational Aids need calibration, testing and commissioning.

#### Possibilities for Future Airport-Linked Investment

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15. (SBU) Looking to the future, Iraqis could leverage increased Mosul Airport passenger and cargo air service to build economic activity in the province. The Iraqi investor who holds the airport duty-free concession has already said

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he is interested in renovating and reopening his facility. The airport could also host conferences, with the possibility of meeting spaces and accommodations constructed under Iraqi auspices on land adjoining the airport outside the CF base. Commercial air cargo operations will create jobs and facilitate the movement of high value goods to and from the region.

#### Short Term: PRT Convening Working Groups

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16. (SBU) To address the short-term logistical issues, the PRT is working with CF to convene a working group to identify and plan solutions to technical, logistical and tactical issues. We will forward these solutions for review and approval by CF and Embassy Baghdad. In addition, the PRT is canvassing local business contacts to assess the possibility of Iraqis investing in facilities that may be co-located with the airport. Lastly, the PRT is facilitating contacts among Iraqis and international aviation industries interested in using Mosul Airport.

#### Long Term: Combined Support for Full Airport Capacity

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17. (SBU) In addition to planning and resolving technical aspects of a joint-use airport, the current Iraqi management and staff at Mosul Airport would have to be expanded, trained and improved to drive the facility's long-term development, operation and management. Building sustainable capacity for the facility and the local economy, the PRT is working with local and national Iraqi and USG officials to develop a comprehensive strategic plan to develop this capacity with a combination of GOI funds, Quick Response Funds, Economic Support Funds and other USG money.

18. (SBU) COMMENT: Ninewa residents and officials happy to see national attention and economic progress return to their province have greeted the reopening of civilian commercial passenger traffic through Mosul Airport with pride and

enthusiasm. The PRT will continue to work with Iraqi and USG partners to facilitate continued commercial operations.  
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